



**Cover photo:** Soviet troops withdraw on their way north from Jalalabad. (c. ~~Wideworld~~)

# Afghanistan: Soviet Occupation and Withdrawal

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*The following report was prepared by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research as part of an annual series of Special Reports on the situation in Afghanistan.*

## **Introduction and Summary**

Although 1988 has proven to be a watershed year, the bloody conflict in Afghanistan continues. Protracted UN-sponsored negotiations concluded in Geneva with the April 14 signing of an accord between Afghanistan and Pakistan; the U.S.S.R. and the United States signed as guarantors. On May 15, in compliance with the Geneva agreement, the Soviets began to withdraw their troops from Afghanistan; by mid-August, they withdrew about one-half of their forces. The shift of military momentum toward the resistance, or *mujahidin*, probably is irreversible. Under the impact of these developments, the demoralization of the Soviet-backed regime in Kabul has accelerated.

If the Soviet Union carries out its obligation to withdraw all of its troops by February 15, 1989, the ninth year will be the last year of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev concluded that Soviet involvement in Afghanistan was a "bleeding wound" and worked steadily to end it. His decision was undoubtedly influenced by a number of considerations: By 1987 the *mujahidin* had fought the Soviet regime forces to a stalemate; Moscow's Afghan policy had alienated it from the Islamic, Western, and nonaligned countries; and the Soviets failed to find a client leader in

Kabul who could capture the loyalty of the Afghan people. Furthermore, more than 5 million Afghans, approximately one-third of the country's prewar population, remained in Pakistan and Iran as refugees. Systematic terror bombings, aerial bombardment, and cross-border shelling failed to end Pakistan's support for the Afghan resistance.

The December 1987 summit between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev in Washington, a final shuttle trip to Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran by UN negotiator Diego Cordovez in January 1988, and Gorbachev's February 8, 1988, announcement of his withdrawal decision set the stage for the final round of UN-sponsored Geneva negotiations which had begun in 1982. The parties gathered in Geneva for the last time in early March. After 2 months of negotiations, an agreement was signed on April 14, 1988, to become effective on May 15: The U.S.S.R. would withdraw one-half of its forces by August 15 and the remainder by February 15, 1989. Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed not to interfere in each other's internal affairs.

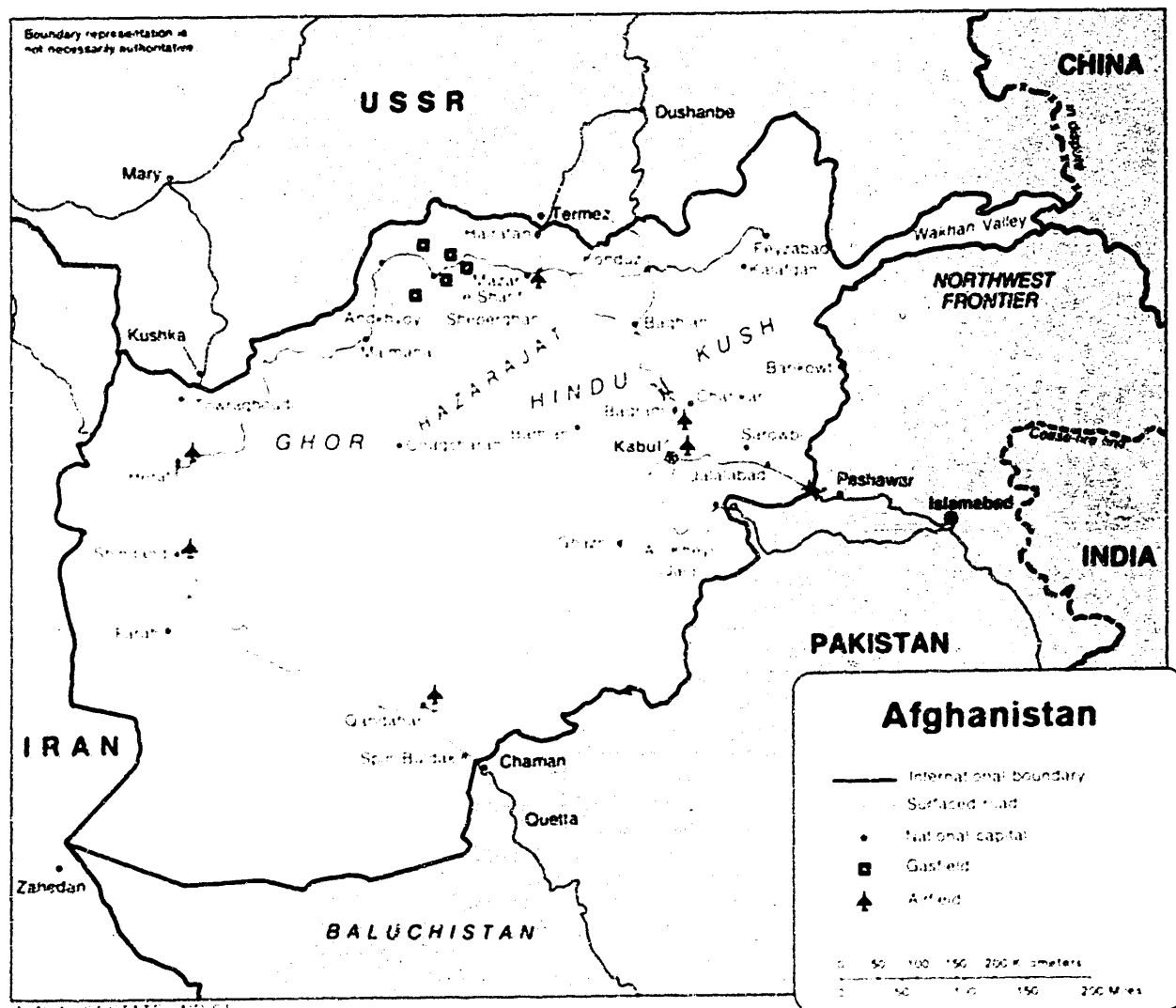
The first phase of the Soviet withdrawal was followed by a series of regime military reverses; Soviet troops subsequently have intervened to prevent *mujahidin* capture of key towns and cities. In late October, the U.S.S.R. introduced sophisticated aircraft and surface-to-surface missiles into the conflict and stated that it would suspend the commencement of its final phase of withdrawal. Nevertheless, the Soviets are obligated to withdraw the remainder of their forces by February 15, 1989.

Most observers believe that the Najibullah regime will not long survive the Soviet departure. It already has be-

gun to unravel as party desertions increase and factionalism intensifies with each group blaming the other for the looming crisis. In efforts to persuade elements of the resistance to join in a "national reconciliation" coalition government, Najibullah and his "nonparty" prime minister, Hassan Sharq, steadily reduced the role of People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) members in the Kabul government, offered top government jobs to resistance commanders, and promised more autonomy to ethnic minority groups. However, the resistance remains unimpressed and uninterested in any such coalition.

Faced with an increasingly unstable situation, Moscow dispatched First Deputy Foreign Minister Yuliy Vorontsov to Kabul as Ambassador in October. A party purge and subsequent exiling of Khalq faction leader Gulabzoi as Ambassador to Moscow were intended to remove opponents of compromise and "national reconciliation" while trying to calm factional strife within the PDPA. It remains unclear whether the Soviets are willing or able to force the PDPA to step aside and transfer power peacefully to an interim government. If not, both party and government are destined to disappear in the wake of eventual military defeat.

The shape of a post-Najibullah government has not yet emerged, but the *mujahidin* should play a central role. The United Nations continues efforts to provide for a peaceful transfer of power and to arrange for an "interim government." There have been a number of suggested scenarios for a transitional government, including a proposal announced by the Resistance Alliance in Peshawar on October 31. The alliance proposed holding elections inside



Afghanistan for a large, representative assembly (*Shura*) that would elect a new head of state and approve a new interim government. The initiation of direct talks between Soviet and resistance representatives in Taif, Saudi Arabia, in early December was a landmark development that could lead to a political settlement.

A restoration of peace, accompanied by a change in government, would result in the return of millions of refugees. Under the leadership of the UN coordinator for Afghan relief, Sadruddin Aga Khan, efforts for resettlement and reconstruction of Afghanistan's shattered infrastructure have begun.

### The Soviet Decision To Withdraw

Following the direction of the U.S.-U.S.S.R. summit in late 1987, General Secretary Gorbachev announced February 8 Moscow's decision to with-

draw Soviet military forces from Afghanistan. The statement climaxed a long and difficult decisionmaking process that had taken almost 3 years. The Soviet leadership recognized that there could be no military solution in Afghanistan without a massive increase in their military commitment. In the end, Moscow was unwilling to provide the necessary support to win militarily, and there was no realistic alternative to cutting losses and withdrawing.

Domestically, the war had aggravated economic and social strains, and mounting casualties had led to widespread popular dismay. By withdrawing, Moscow also hoped to further its international image, including improving its relations with the United States, the West, the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.), and the Islamic world. The pullout also was consistent with

Gorbachev's overall domestic and foreign policies. The Soviets consider a settlement, along with the INF [Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces] Treaty, as a victory for Gorbachev's "new thinking." Subsequently, Gorbachev has stated that the Afghan settlement is a model for other regional conflicts.

### Gorbachev's Offer

The modalities of the withdrawal offered by Gorbachev in his February 8 statement included:

- Beginning Soviet troop withdrawal on May 15 provided the accords were signed by March 15;
- Withdrawing in 10 months or less;
- Agreeing that withdrawing the bulk of the troops early in the process (frontloading) could be addressed in the negotiations; and
- Expecting an end to "outside interference" in Afghanistan.

## The Geneva Negotiations

## The Final Round

Despite quick agreement on some key points, including the timetable and frontloading, the talks proved to be difficult. Pakistan, representing the interests of the Afghan resistance, wanted the Najibullah regime to be replaced by an interim government before the accords were initialed. Eventually it was



In signing the accord, the United States, on the basis of understandings reached with the Soviets, reserved the right to continue to provide military assistance to parties in Afghanistan, while stating its readiness to exercise

restraint if the Soviets did so. The United States also noted that its role as guarantor did not imply any recognition of the regime in Kabul.

However, U.S. hopes for the Soviet restriction of military assistance to the Kabul regime were not realized. The Soviets immediately announced that their departing troops would leave behind equipment and military facilities valued at more than \$1 billion and on June 13, publicly reemphasized their intention to continue supplying military hardware to the Kabul regime. Substantial deliveries of military equipment—including tanks, armored personnel carriers, and aircraft—have continued unabated throughout 1988.

### Implementing the Accords

The agreement's fourth instrument presented a procedure for monitoring the accords. Cordovez was instructed to lend his "good offices" to Pakistan and Afghanistan and was authorized "such personnel under his authority as required" to investigate possible violations. Fifty military officers, drawn from existing UN peacekeeping operations, were seconded to Pakistan and Afghanistan under the command of General Rauli Helminen of Finland. The group, known as the UN Good Offices Mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan (UNGOMAP), was formally established by the Secretary General on April 26 through an exchange of letters with the President of the Security Council. Pakistan and Afghanistan pay operational costs while the United Nations funds travel expenses, equipment, and salaries. On October 31, the Security Council voted to regularize UNGOMAP's status through a formal resolution.

UNGOMAP has made a significant contribution in monitoring the Soviet withdrawal. On August 16, it certified that the U.S.S.R. had complied with the Geneva accords by withdrawing one-half of its troop strength. It remains poised to oversee the final withdrawal as well.

Under the accords, reports of alleged violations are submitted to the local UNGOMAP office and to UN offices in Geneva; they are to be discussed by the two countries within 48 hours of submission. Since the accords have been in effect, Kabul has frequently accused Pakistan of supporting the *mujahidin* in violation of the Geneva accords. Pakistan has denied such



Secretary Shultz meets with Afghan resistance delegation on November 9, 1988. From left to right: Masood Khalili, Din Mohammed, resistance spokesman Burhanuddin Rabbani, Mohammed Waziri, Mohammed-Sajjookie, Eshan Jan Areef, Najibullah Lafraie, and Abdul Rahim (State Department Photo)

charges and, for its part, charged that Afghan terror bombings, shelling, and aerial bombardment of Pakistani territory were violations. UNGOMAP has not, as yet, confirmed any allegations of violations.

### The Impact of Geneva on the UN Annual Resolution

The United Nations has debated the Afghanistan issue every year since 1979, condemning the Soviet occupation by a generally increasing margin: In 1987, the 42d UN General Assembly vote was 123 to 19 with 11 abstentions—a record vote. This year, as a direct consequence of the Geneva accords and the completion of one-half of the Soviet pullout, the parties agreed on a consensus resolution. The resolution was passed on November 3 without debate.

The consensus resolution specifically states that the situation found today in Afghanistan results from "the violation of principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of the recognized norms of inter-state conduct." It welcomes the Geneva accords and calls on all parties to implement them faithfully. The resolution "notes the continuing process of withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan and expresses its expectation that the withdrawal will be completed in accordance

with the relevant provisions of the Geneva agreements." It further calls on all foreign powers not to interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs and for the establishment of a "broad-based government."

By agreeing to the resolution, the Soviet Union reaffirmed its commitment to fulfill the provision of the Geneva accords, specifically the removal of its troops by February 15. The resolution also makes clear that foreign (i.e., Soviet) forces are responsible for the war and destruction in Afghanistan.

### Resistance Opposition to the Accords

Peshawar's seven party alliance, the political leadership of the resistance, opposed the Geneva talks from their inception arguing that the Kabul regime is illegitimate and has no authority to engage in such negotiations. The alliance maintains that the Afghan conflict can be settled only by direct talks between itself and the Soviets. Furthermore, the alliance was concerned that the Geneva accords might lead to diminished military support, putting it at a disadvantage *vis-a-vis* Kabul's forces. On April 16, just 2 days after the accords were signed, the Resistance Alliance sponsored a massive rally in Peshawar to register its displeasure. Resistance spokesmen vowed to continue the war against the Najibullah regime.

## The Military Situation

The Soviet withdrawal decision, which led to the Geneva accords, was influenced heavily by battlefield events in Afghanistan. In the final analysis, Moscow deemed the overall costs of pursuing a military solution to be too high.

### Conflict Dynamics

From the beginning the U.S.S.R. directed and dominated the military effort. During the first 8 years of the conflict, Soviet commanders and advisers orchestrated virtually all military operations; Soviet airpower provided the mobility and firepower needed to apply modern counterinsurgency tactics; Soviet *Spetsnaz* (special forces) troops ambushed *mujahidin* supply columns; and the Soviets controlled key locations and facilities as well as the main road network.

By itself, the Kabul regime has never been able to mount a credible military effort. The Afghan army, comprised predominantly of conscripts, is plagued by low morale, chronic defections to the *mujahidin*, and inadequate transportation and logistic capabilities. Primarily it has performed garrison duty and participated in Soviet-planned sweep operations. Ministry of Interior security troops, members of the Afghan secret police (KHAD, later known as WAD), and other special units have been more reliable but are too few to tip the balance against the *mujahidin*. The U.S.S.R. has supplied regime forces with great amounts of modern equipment in hopes of creating a military capable of functioning on its own after the Soviet departure. This strategy does not address the fundamental problem, however, which is a lack of motivated and trained Afghan army personnel.

Over the years the resistance steadily built up a hard-core cadre of experienced commanders capable of planning and carrying out effective, though limited, military operations. Consequently—until the Soviet decision to withdraw—the war was characterized by periods when new Soviet equipment and tactics caused the *mujahidin* considerable difficulty followed by periods of *mujahidin* adjustment and resurgence. In the last such cycle, the Soviets used improved tactical intelligence, *Spetsnaz*, and helicopters in a concerted assault on *mujahidin* supply

lines. But within a year, resistance logistics were moving faster than ever.

The *mujahidin*'s acquisition of surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) was critical to their ability to counter these Soviet tactics. Since late 1986, when SAMs were used in significant numbers, the *mujahidin* were able to move without constant fear of Soviet helicopter attacks. This SAM capability soon forced all Soviet aircraft to fly higher with much less effectiveness, and the resistance supply and morale situation improved dramatically.

### Improved Mujahidin Position

By early 1988, the *mujahidin* had seized the tactical initiative. Soviet troops reacted to situations created by the resistance while attempting to breathe life into the moribund Afghan army. Important changes in *mujahidin* strategy during the year, the impact of which has been magnified by Soviet withdrawal, underscore this basic change in battlefield dynamics.

First, the level of cooperation among groups fighting inside the country reached unprecedented levels. *Mujahidin* commanders, aware of the value of such cooperation, set aside previous differences and suspicions to achieve the common goal of evicting the Soviets and the Najibullah regime in Kabul. Operationally, coordination among commanders representing different resistance parties in various localities has increased markedly. Moreover, they have shared captured supplies as well as intelligence, and some groups have shared fighters for given operations, occasionally dispatching guerrilla units from one region to another.

Second, in mid-year, *mujahidin* commanders decided to avoid costly frontal assaults, opting instead to retain the classic guerrilla strategy of surrounding, isolating, and harassing garrisons and then waiting for them to fall. In many cases, this tactic has included the negotiated surrender of most or all of the regime defenders. Employing such tactics against heavily manned regime garrisons, such as Khowst, put increased pressure on their manpower resources. Some *mujahidin* commanders did not attack departing Soviet formations, preferring to concentrate on the regime and to build up their forces for a future possible full-scale attack against Kabul.

With military supplies more abundant than ever—including tons of materiel captured from the regime—*mujahidin* commanders were able to field more men than ever before. As victory became apparent, weapons were available, and capable commanders were leading operations in the field.

### Soviet Withdrawal

The Geneva accords called for a 50% reduction of Soviet forces in the first 3 months, May 15–August 15. Most Western estimates put Soviet troop strength at about 120,000 men, counting all Soviet military personnel in country. Soviet officials conceded to only 100,300 troops in Afghanistan.

Early Soviet plans appear to have included a withdrawal first from the east (Jalalabad-Gardez-Ghazni) and the south and west (Qandahar-Shindand-Herat). But, as the withdrawal began, the security situation became so desperate in the Qandahar area that this option was discarded. Instead, some troops remained in Shindand and Herat, while troops from Konduz and Feyzabad in the north withdrew. After an extensive, 11th-hour airlift operation from Qandahar and other areas in early to mid-August, the Soviets essentially managed to meet the requirement to have 50% of their forces withdrawn by August 15.

The first units to leave were some of the best, most mobile formations the Soviets had in Afghanistan. For example, most *Spetsnaz* troops and an airborne brigade had been removed by August 15, probably because their mission of border interdiction no longer was important. Other units withdrawn were independent brigades and regiments which had demonstrated effective combat capabilities.

The drawdown of Soviet personnel highlighted the weaknesses of the regime: The departure of Soviet troops from an area usually led to significant *mujahidin* gains. But Soviet troop morale also declined significantly, as evidenced by increased incidents of public drunkenness, drug use, unauthorized sale of weapons and ammunition, indiscriminate firing of weapons, and even assaults on Afghan civilian "allies."

After August 15, the Soviets began reorganizing and preparing for the last phase of removing the remaining 50,000–60,000 troops. Soviet troops remained in only two corridors in northern Afghanistan: from Kabul north to the border and, in the west, from Shindand north to the border. This force—supported by additional aircraft based

in the U.S.S.R.—remained quite capable of conducting major operations around important garrisons and securing the lines of communication to the U.S.S.R.

### Renewed Soviet Activities

Soviet reliance on Afghan security forces to maintain control of provincial capitals proved to be overly optimistic. In late October and early November, the Soviets responded to a general deterioration of the security situation—including a severe *mujahidin* threat to Qandahar and heavy rocket attacks on Kabul—with new deployments. A MiG-27 Flogger regiment with more than 30 aircraft arrived at Shindand airfield in late October, and by early November SCUD launchers were deployed to the Kabul area—both new weapons in the Afghan conflict. SCUD missile firings began almost immediately, as did heavy air strikes by aircraft stationed across the border inside the U.S.S.R.

Missions by Soviet-based Tu-22M Backfire strategic bombers and Su-24 Fencer aircraft became routine, along

with strikes by the Afghan-based MiG-23, MiG-27, Su-25, and Su-17 aircraft. The bombing was concentrated around Qandahar, in the Kabul area, and Jalalabad, as well as along the withdrawal routes. As in earlier instances of Soviet conventional warfare against the *mujahidin* guerrillas, the latest Soviet military escalation has had only a limited effect on the resistance.

In early November, Moscow "suspended" the second phase of its troop withdrawal, which it previously had announced would begin November 15. In fact, the Geneva accords do not require the Soviets to resume their withdrawal by any specific date as long as it is completed by mid-February. During a visit to Kabul in mid-November, Oleg Baklanov, Central Committee Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), said troops would return to the Soviet Union in strict compliance with the timetable of the Geneva accords. A bilateral protocol on military and economic cooperation also was signed during Baklanov's visit.

These steps were designed to apply political as well as military pressure on the resistance and Pakistan. They

proved fruitless, however, as the resistance and the Pakistan Government reiterated their determination not to be intimidated by Moscow. Moscow's escalation also has contradicted earlier Soviet assurances that it would not engage in offensive operations unless attacked. Moreover, launching military operations from Soviet territory runs counter to Soviet undertakings in the Geneva accords not to intervene in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

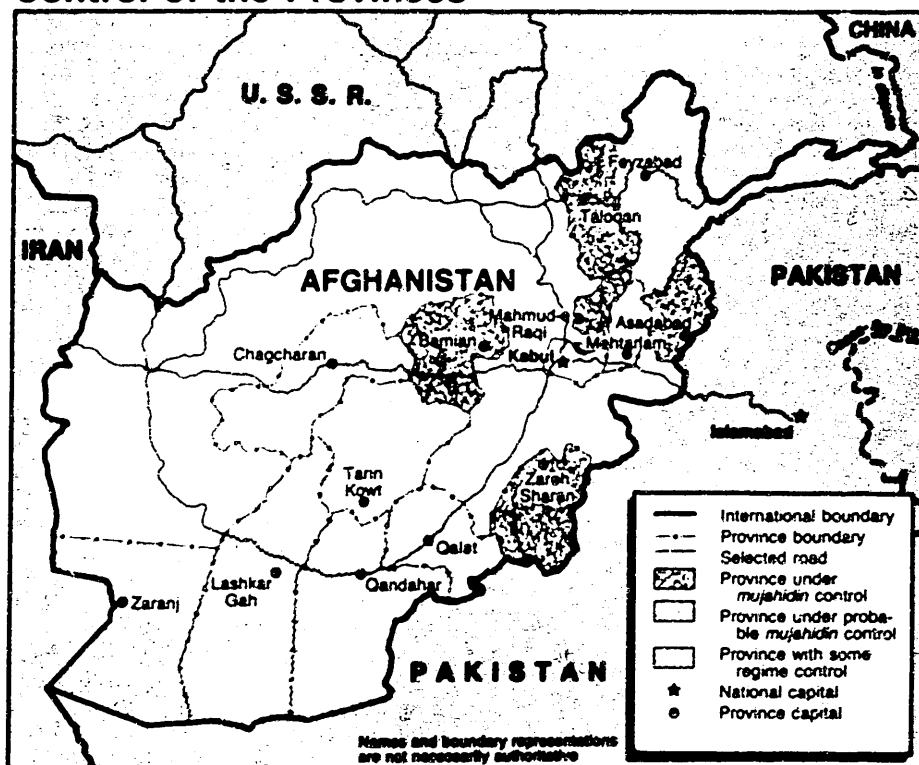
### Combat Operations

The Soviets and their allies had been losing outposts and small garrisons for some time before the Soviet withdrawal began. Subsequently, this deterioration accelerated dramatically. As Soviet forces vacated areas (mainly in eastern and southern Afghanistan), the Kabul regime forces began retreating from outlying areas to consolidate with its major garrisons. By the end of the year, Kabul could not claim to have increased control anywhere. Qandahar and Jalalabad, the two largest urban areas outside Kabul, were under heavy *mujahidin* pressure. The deteriorating situation in Qandahar apparently prompted the Soviet long-range bombing campaign which began in early November.

An unprecedented number of *mujahidin* victories vividly exposed the weak core of the Najibullah government. By the end of May, Commander Masood's men had recaptured the entire Panjsher Valley. Some posts were vacated, others overrun. In total, the resistance scored a stunning victory in an area hotly contested throughout the war. Control of the Panjsher shortened *mujahidin* supply lines and extended Masood's influence toward Kabul and the Salang area. In October, regime forces were pushed out of the Konar Valley, the northern gateway to Jalalabad.

By November 15, five province capitals were in *mujahidin* control despite the Soviet regime tactic of heavily bombing urban areas under resistance control. The *mujahidin* controlled Asadabad (Konarha Province), Taloqan (Takhar Province), Bamian (Bamian Province), Zareh Sharan (Paktika Province), and Mahmud-e Raqi (Kapisa Province). Other provincial capitals, such as in Laghman, Oruzghan, and Ghown, were seriously threatened.

## Control of the Provinces



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However, the resistance, concerned over Soviet reprisal against civilian populations, has avoided taking control of urban centers.

At the same time, the road between Kabul and Qandahar was cut in numerous places. Qandahar itself was completely surrounded with supplies for regime troops arriving by aircraft and occasional heavily armored convoys using the road from Shindand. The situation in and around Qandahar worsened daily, including a major regime defeat at Spin Buldak in early September. The *mujahidin* capture of Takteh Pol south of Qandahar at the end of the month brought the airport, 26 kilometers south of Qandahar, within mortar and rocket range. *Mujahidin* forces cut the airport road in several places, threatening the regime's ability to hold out in Qandahar.

In late October-early November, the focus shifted to the area from Jalalabad to the Pakistani border. Resistance fighters captured the border post of Torkham and a number of strongpoints along the road to Jalalabad. A regime counterattack—using armored vehicles and reinforcements brought in from as far away as Mazar-e Sharif—recaptured Torkham in mid-November but lost it again later in the month to a resistance counterattack. Regime units sent to push back the *mujahidin* defected en masse, and the resistance continued to gain ground in its advance toward Jalalabad. Around Kabul, the *mujahidin* position also improved this past summer and fall.

### The Regime Armed Forces

Reeling under the pressure of an unbroken series of defeats, retreats, and consolidations, the Afghan army is a demoralized force. Poorly led but better equipped than the *mujahidin*, the army has not expanded its control anywhere in the country over the last year. Most experts agree that it probably can survive no more than a matter of months after a complete Soviet withdrawal.

Since the withdrawal started, the Afghan army was defeated at Ali Kheyl, Spin Buldak, and in the Konar and Panjsher Valleys. The *mujahidin* efforts in the Konar Valley are particularly noteworthy since they took Barikot, the garrison nearest the Pakistan border, and then methodically moved



*Mujahidin in prayer (caption)*

down the rest of the valley. Army personnel could not have been surprised, nor could they claim that they were far from supporting bases and supplies. Apparently, they simply did not have the will to stand and fight whereas the *mujahidin* did. Likewise, in the north, Konduz was captured by the *mujahidin* as soon as Soviet troops departed in August. The regime was able to retake the city only after major intervention by the Soviets, who provided command and control as well as artillery and air support.

After Soviet troops leave, the regime's ability to use its arsenals of Soviet equipment effectively will be severely limited. Regime pilots, in chronic short supply, are reluctant to fly into threatened areas. The regime also lacks the capability to provide logistical support to the cities, towns, garrisons, and outposts it is attempting to hold.

In addition to shortages of qualified and capable officers, the regime is chronically short of manpower. Forced conscriptions keep the ranks partly filled, but with soldiers of dubious allegiance. The army probably

does not have more than 40,000 troops. The regime has bribed tribal militia groups to increase overall strength. However, most tribal leaders are keen political watchers; if they sense the regime coming apart, they are likely to side with the *mujahidin*, regardless of what Kabul may pay. Kabul may be able to count upon some 25,000 militia. KHAD and *Sarandoy* (paramilitary police) are generally considered to be Kabul's most loyal and capable personnel, but both have had their share of deserters—an attempted coup in Qandahar was led by KHAD personnel in late November—and, because of internal political rivalries, they sometimes fight each other. These combined services number fewer than 35,000. Thus, Kabul's forces total about 100,000—far too few to simultaneously hold territory and carry out operations against the *mujahidin*.

Throughout 1988, Soviet weapons, supplies, and other aid continued to be sent to the regime. Some replaced items were lost in battle, but excess shipments continue to attempt to strengthen the regime through hardware.

## The Kabul Regime

### Political Developments

The past year was an unusually difficult one for the PDPA and the regime government. The Soviet decision to withdraw its military forces, which have provided the underpinning for the Kabul regime's survival for 9 years, forced party chief President Najibullah and other key leaders to confront the possibility—indeed, the probability—that both party and government would soon lose power and disappear.

The regime, under Soviet guidance, has followed a two-pronged strategy in an attempt to avoid disaster. It made desperate efforts to shore up its military forces, and it reduced the PDPA role in the central government to induce "opposition elements"—i.e., resistance commanders—to agree to a cease-fire and to join a coalition government. Ironically, however, Najibullah's elaborate "national reconciliation" scenario only exacerbated deep factional rifts within the PDPA and accelerated the unraveling of the regime.

### National Reconciliation Policy: A Parliamentary Facade

As president and party chief, Najibullah has tried to make the concept of national reconciliation appealing and credible to the Afghan people and internationally. Following a Soviet script, he created the facade of the infrastructure for a parliamentary democracy, in which the PDPA party would appear to have a minimal role. Simultaneously, he has stressed the Islamic nature of this new government. The process began in late 1987 with the adoption of a new constitution and the forming of new political parties, including an "Islamic Party," to join the PDPA in a coalition.

### Elections

In accordance with the new constitution, elections were held April 5–15, 1988, for a national parliament, or *Meli Shura*. Voters elected candidates for a lower house (*Wolasi Jirga*) and one-third of the senate (*Senat*); the remaining senators were to be appointed from special interest groups. The March 17 establishment of an election commission and announcement of the election regulations left little time to make arrangements for the elections, thus reducing the credibility of the exercise. Observers reported numerous infractions of the election laws: There were

no secret ballots; candidate lists were not published until after the polls opened; polling booths were unmanned; and 13-year-old children voted (the legal age is 18). In fact, these anomalies were only the most obvious means of fraud and coercion used to achieve the desired results. The resistance, of course, opposed the elections, and despite the regime's efforts, turnout was minimal even in areas under regime control. Resistance interference effectively prevented elections in most of the country.

None of these problems prevented the regime from declaring the elections a success and claiming that 1½ million people voted. The point of the exercise was to establish a parliament in which the PDPA would appear to be a minority, in order to give credibility to the national reconciliation policy. This was achieved by having non-PDPA associates of the regime run as members of small left-wing parties—two of which participated in a coalition with the PDPA—or as individuals representing various front organizations. Najibullah also stressed from the beginning that a significant number of seats would be saved for the "opposition"—by which he meant members of the resistance. The net result of Najibullah's reverse rigging scheme was that the PDPA technically won only 22% of the parliamentary contests.

### A New Government

The new parliament that convened on May 30, 2 weeks after the Geneva accords became effective and the beginning of the Soviet troop withdrawal, consisted of 184 lower house deputies and 115 senators: 62 house and 82 senate seats were left vacant for the resistance "opposition." Non-PDPA member Mohammed Hassan Sharq was selected by President Najibullah to be the new prime minister, replacing party stalwart Sultan Ali Keshhtmand. The appointment was intended dramatically to reinforce the point that the PDPA was going to take a back seat; in fact, the new constitution vests key powers in the presidency, and there was no indication that Najibullah was prepared to give up that central role. In any event, Sharq's long-time association with the Parcham wing of the party, dating back to the Daoud government (1973–78), made the "non-PDPA" appellation meaningless. Sharq had served as the regime's deputy prime minister since June 1987 and before that as its Ambassador to India.

Likewise, on June 7, when Sharq announced his cabinet, consisting of 11 new members and 10 former ones, the nonparty credentials of the "new" ministers were undermined by the fact that most had served the regime government previously in other capacities. Furthermore, the powerful ministries of interior, state security, and foreign affairs remained in PDPA hands. The major exception was the effort to enlist a resistance commander or a respected retired general from an earlier era to become minister of defense. This post remained open for some time, but in August it finally was given to Army Chief of Staff General Shahnawaz Tanai of the Khalq faction. Thus, almost 2 years after he announced the national reconciliation policy in January 1987, Najibullah has been unable to attract a single major figure of the resistance or prominent Afghan refugee to join the government.

### Multiple Parties

Creating the appearance of a multi-party system is basic to Najibullah's national reconciliation policy. At the time of the April elections, the PDPA pressured two small northern ethnic parties—the Workers Organization of Afghanistan (SZA) and the Workers Revolutionary Organization of Afghanistan (SAZA)—to join it and run as a front called the Left Democratic Union. In July, Najibullah officially recognized two more new parties: the "Union of Ansarullah" party, based in southern Afghanistan, and the "Movement of Solidarity of the People of Afghanistan" party. An early September conference of political parties and organizations brought seven parties together. But the proceedings indicated that these small and primarily local organizations representing minority and regional interests were not able to gain converts for national reconciliation. Indeed, some new parties appeared to have joined the chorus of Najibullah's critics.

### Zones of Peace and Neutrality

As soon as the Soviet withdrawal preparations were underway in late April and May, resistance pressure and the need to man major garrisons vacated by the Soviets forced the regime to pull back from smaller exposed positions near the Pakistan border. Consequently, Najibullah decreed the recently vacated area as "demilitarized zones" along the border to facilitate the return of refugees. The gesture was

futile; the *mujahidin* continued their steady advance, and the refugees did not come back.

By the end of the summer, the pressures produced by a series of successful resistance military offensives and by the failure to make any headway on the political front had intensified. In his September 1 speech to the political parties' conference, Najibullah introduced the idea of establishing zones of peace and neutrality, where full provincial power would be ceded to the "opposition." Once again, Najibullah was trying to make it appear that the government was voluntarily ceding power in areas that the resistance had already occupied or taken over by force.

### Ethnic and Autonomy Issues and Administrative Controls

During the year, two new provinces were created—Sar-e-Pol in the north and Nuristan in the northeast—by carving out territory from adjoining provinces.<sup>1</sup> In each case, the purpose appears to have been to create a new entity where an ethnic minority—the Hazaras and Nuristanis respectively—would dominate. This readjustment would guarantee representation in the new parliament for these ethnic groups. At the same time, the Sharq government has abolished the special ministry for nationalities that carries connotations of a Soviet-style system.

In mid-March, when the regime named a special deputy prime minister to look after the northern areas, rumors spread that Moscow and the regime were considering partitioning Afghanistan if the regime were driven out of Kabul. Actually, as the government later announced, the plan was to divide the entire country into zones, each with a super chief. The government hoped that with this arrangement it could improve central control over provincial areas, while allowing more local—and ethnic—autonomy. The theory was that if local ethnic groups and tribes were given more responsibility for their own areas, they would stop fighting the regime. But the plan will not be implemented as the resistance forces the pace of the regime's downfall. Meanwhile zones of a different kind may be created; the government is considering amalgamating provinces that

have fallen to the resistance with neighboring provinces where the provincial capitals still remain—at least nominally—under Kabul's authority.

### PDPA: Party Strife

From the beginning of the year, it has been apparent that the withdrawal decision seriously has strained the already fractured PDPA. Two powerful groups within the party, the Khalqis, led by former Interior Minister Sayed Mohammed Gulabzoi, and alienated Parcham supporters of former party chief Babrak Karmal, have consistently opposed Najibullah's national reconciliation policy. Both groups have accused Najibullah of cooperating with a Soviet sell-out of the April 1978 "revolution"; they would prefer to continue the war rather than make further political concessions which could lead to a transfer of power from PDPA hands. Earlier, the Babrakists also were blaming Najibullah for letting the Khalqis amass too much power. By the end of the year, however, they appeared to be making common cause with the Khalqis in plotting against Najibullah.

Najibullah has tried to undermine his critics by removing them from party and government positions. Thus three PDPA central committee plenums during the year, January 27–28, June 22, and October 19, at which "organizational"—i.e., personnel—matters were high on the agenda, were extremely divisive. The period of forming the new Sharq government in May also was particularly difficult as Najibullah tried to exploit the policy of opening up ministerial posts for the "resistance opposition" as a way to remove his own party opposition—particularly his chief adversary, Gulabzoi.

Najibullah has found it easier to remove Babrakists and other Parcham challengers than the Khalqis. The January plenum demoted two prominent Babrakists. In late May, Prime Minister Sultan Ali Keshmand and Defense Minister Mohammed Rafie were eased out to free spaces in the new government for nonparty candidates. The June 22 plenum was billed as a party unity plenum—presumably to calm the agitation triggered by the May upheavals. The most notable personnel action was the elevation to full membership on the central committee of a group of high-ranking military officers. But by fall, the party was in shambles. At the October 19 plenum, many party members,

mostly Babrakists and including some central committee members, were arrested; a formerly close associate of Babrak Karmal, Abdul Zohor Razmjo, who had already been replaced as the Kabul city party chief in January, was removed from the Politburo.

Najibullah, however, had more trouble eliminating his Khalq opponents, who were firmly entrenched in the defense and police establishments. As Minister of Interior, Gulabzoi commanded his own private army—the *Sarandoy*, a special police militia force. Indeed, the escalating military crisis and the focus on defense—it was the priority issue at the January and June plenums—appears to have helped Gulabzoi consolidate and broaden his power base through much of the year. Recurring rumors about a possible Gulabzoi-led coup against Najibullah revealed Najibullah's apparent inability to force out his major challenger as well as the intensity of the power struggle. Meanwhile, repeated efforts to force party members to sign up for military service have had an extremely negative effect on party cadre morale.

After years of trying to enforce peace between the warring PDPA factions, the mid-October arrival in Kabul of Soviet Ambassador Yuliy Vorontsov appears to have been a turning point in Soviet policy toward party infighting and in the fortunes of Gulabzoi. Although most party dissidents arrested at the October 19 plenum were Babrakists, some Khalqis also were detained. Furthermore, Gulabzoi was unable to prevent the Khalqis' most adept survivor, Saleh Mohammed Zeary, a member of the Politburo since April 1978, from being dropped from that body. Throughout the year, Zeary had been outspoken in his criticism of Najibullah's policy. Finally, on November 8, Gulabzoi himself was unceremoniously dispatched to Moscow as the new regime Ambassador.

Gulabzoi's removal was a strong indication that the Soviets want to see further evolution of the national reconciliation policy and hope that it can lead to a political settlement. As the February 15 deadline for the Soviets to complete their withdrawal approached, the need to achieve such a settlement became more urgent. Therefore, Gulabzoi's militant opposition to the policy could be tolerated no longer.

Without Gulabzoi, the intensity of the Khalq-Parcham struggle may diminish; but it is not over. Another old-time Khalqi, Mohammed Aslam Watanjar, has been named as the new Minister of

<sup>1</sup>These new provinces have not yet been delineated on international maps of Afghanistan.

Interior—a move that may have been necessary to try to calm resentment among Khalqis and within the *Sarandoy* over Gulabzoi's abrupt dismissal. Meanwhile, continuing rumors anticipating more party purges of former Babrakists indicates that the party remains in turmoil.

## The Search for a Political Solution

During the final Geneva negotiations, Pakistan dropped its demand for the installation of an interim government prior to concluding the accords, in return for an agreement that UN negotiator Cordovez would continue to pursue the issue in his personal capacity after the accords went into effect. Although most participants in the Afghan struggle would have preferred a negotiated political settlement to the conflict, achieving a consensus agreement on an interim government has proven to be difficult.

The obvious problem is that the Najibullah regime has resisted agreeing to its own demise, while the Resistance Alliance has steadily rejected joining any coalition with the regime and insists on a transfer rather than a sharing of power. The U.S.S.R., for its own interests as well as those of its clients, staunchly has backed Kabul's position, hoping to preserve the PDPA as an institution and a residual role for some regime members. But the Soviets ultimately may decide they have an overriding interest in obtaining a negotiated resolution before their departure. Subsequently, the situation in Afghanistan at the end of 1988 may lead Moscow to support the departure of the PDPA.

### Kabul's View of a Political Settlement

As originally conceived, the objectives of Kabul's national reconciliation policy were a cease-fire and a political settlement allowing the PDPA to retain control through the all-powerful presidency as well as the military and security ministries. Over time, Najibullah has accepted the more modest goal of preserving the party as an entity in a future government. However, the continued lack of interest by the *mujahidin* political leaders in Peshawar and the military commanders inside Afghanistan in participating in such a government presents the regime, and

Moscow, with a critical challenge. The key question remains whether they will agree to a transfer of power to achieve a political settlement.

Rumors since early August—when Foreign Minister Shevardnadze made his third visit to Kabul this year—suggest that Najibullah would step down, leaving Prime Minister Sharq to arrange for an interim government of neutrals. When he visited Moscow in September to sign economic aid agreements, Sharq was given a public relations buildup by the Soviets, fueling further speculation that he had been picked to play a key future role.

Expectations were raised in mid-October when the international press gathered in Kabul for an anticipated historic PDPA central committee plenum. After more than 1 week's delay, during which new Soviet Ambassador Yuliy Vorontsov arrived in Kabul, the plenum produced no dramatic change in the top leadership. However, the attendant arrests and demotions of party dissidents and the subsequent exile of the intransigent Khalq leader, Minister of the Interior Gulabzoi, to Moscow as Ambassador, may offer a more flexible PDPA approach to the interim government issue.

## The Resistance

### Planning for an Interim Government

Leaders of the Afghan resistance movement—both the seven alliance party chiefs in Peshawar, Pakistan, and the commanders inside Afghanistan—have been primarily preoccupied with the military struggle against the Soviets and the PDPA regime. During 1988, however, with the signing of the Geneva accords and the 50% withdrawal in August of Soviet troops, the resistance leadership has paid progressively more attention to pressing political issues.

During the weeks preceding the signing of the Geneva accords, the alliance, together with Pakistan, opposed signing the accords before installation of a transitional government in Kabul. The anticipation of a withdrawal settlement, enhanced by Gorbachev's February 8 statement and Najibullah's aggressive campaign for a cease-fire and a coalition government, put pressure on the alliance to develop its own interim government proposal. On January 31, the alliance issued a general statement calling for a government in Afghanistan composed of the resistance, refugees, and "Afghan Mus-

lims living inside the country." This latter phrase was as far as the resistance was prepared to go in response to Najibullah's call for a coalition government. As no member of the PDPA would be considered a good Muslim by the resistance, it constituted a rejection of any future role for dedicated PDPA members.

Three weeks later, on February 23, the alliance followed up with a more detailed blueprint for a transitional government to take over in Kabul pending national elections. The formula included a supreme council of the seven party leaders, a head of state and government, and a 28-member Cabinet made up of 14 *mujahidin*, seven refugees, and seven Muslims "now living in Afghanistan."

Subsequently, Engineer Ahmad Shah, deputy leader of Abd ul-Rassul Sayyaf's *Ittihad-i-Islami* party, was chosen to head the government. His government eventually included two deputy prime ministers and Cabinet officers from among the different parties. A constitution was adopted that was based exclusively on Koranic law. The Cabinet met several times and sent a team into Afghanistan to examine possible sites for a temporary in-country headquarters.

In late June-early July, UN negotiator Cordovez once again visited the region. His mission was to check on UN monitoring of the Geneva accords and to discuss with the various parties his ideas about a future interim government. At a press conference in Islamabad at the end of his visit, Cordovez revealed his proposal for an interim government of neutrals or technocrats, who would call for a cease-fire and organize a *Loqa Jirga*. The latter, a traditional Afghan assembly of acknowledged and respected leaders, would make arrangements for choosing a future permanent government. Cordovez's plan first called for the Najibullah government to step aside. It was publicly rejected by Najibullah and other PDPA representatives and by a number of resistance elements.

The Resistance Alliance, in an apparent split decision, voted not to meet with Cordovez during his visit. Pir Sayyid Ahmad Gailani, who was serving as chairman/spokesman of the alliance, indicated in a June 30 press conference that some parties would have welcomed a meeting. Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, who had served as the immediately preceding chairman, held a press conference on July 6 in which he

rejected Cordovez's call for a neutral government and for a *Loya Jirga*, both of which he described as tribal and feudal institutions. He stated that the only solution to Afghanistan's problems lay in general elections.

Both Gailani and Hikmatyar revealed that the alliance was then in the process of working out the modalities for elections to establish a council (*Shura*) composed of representatives from each of Afghanistan's districts as well as refugees. The *Shura* ultimately would accept or reject the alliance-sponsored Ahmad Shah government and would arrange for general elections after the Soviet departure.

Hikmatyar said that the elections for the *Shura* would be held within 105 days—i.e., by October 19. However, nothing happened until October 31, when new alliance spokesman Burhanuddin Rabbani announced a new, more comprehensive plan for a larger and more broad-based *Shura*. Under the new plan, in addition to representatives from each of Afghanistan's districts and refugees, a large number of delegates would be nominated from among *mujahidin* commanders, tribal leaders, and representatives of the expatriate technocrats. The *Shura* would hold a vote of confidence on the Ahmad Shah provisional government, and if it were rejected, would create another interim government in its place.

The alliance, however, has had, and probably will continue to have, difficulty implementing its plans. It is difficult to hold elections for district representatives to a *Shura* in areas where intense fighting continues. In some cases, local councils of *mujahidin* commanders might agree on someone to represent the area. A growing number of such local councils have been formed inside Afghanistan to coordinate military operations and also civil administration in areas that have come under *mujahidin* control. But in other cases, party or tribal competition would make such a consensus impossible.

Conceiving and implementing an effective interim government proposal also has been hampered by the differing viewpoints in the alliance, as revealed in the split over whether or not to meet with Cordovez. One longstanding point of contention has been over a possible role in an interim government for the former king, Zahir Shah. However, there appears to be agreement within the alliance that it would be preferable to reach a political settle-

ment before the February 15 deadline for the Soviet troop departure.

### The Soviet Position and the Taif Talks

The Soviets, who probably authored Kabul's national reconciliation scenario, have steadily backed Najibullah's calls for a coalition government that would include PDPA representation. They also have insisted that the question of a future government is for the Afghans alone to decide. Thus, they have pushed for the alliance to enter into direct talks with the Kabul regime.

The Soviets also had consistently refused to meet with representatives of the alliance, despite the latter's claim that only through such bilateral talks could the Afghan crisis be settled. (One exception had been some unpublicized discussions in Europe with representatives of one of the alliance parties on the prisoner-of-war (POW) issue.) The Kabul government was adamantly opposed to the idea of Moscow talking to the alliance, no doubt fearing that the Soviets might reach agreement independently.

Moscow intensified its search for a political solution following the completion of the first phase of the troop withdrawal in mid-August. In October, Vorontsov was sent to Kabul to lend his diplomatic experience to the search. In early December—in a major change in Soviet policy—he was sent to Taif, Saudi Arabia, to meet with the alliance's current chairman, Burhanuddin Rabbani.

Since the decision to meet directly with the alliance, despite Kabul's objections and Moscow's previous undertaking, Moscow now appears ready to explore all options that could lead to a political settlement. The only agreement to emerge, however, was to continue the talks.

### Soviet Concerns Over POWs

Moscow remains concerned over the fate of its soldiers missing in action (MIA). It estimates that the number of MIAs exceeds 300, although there is no accurate figure regarding how many Soviet MIAs may actually be alive and in the hands of the *mujahidin*. In response to Soviet charges, the Government of Pakistan said that no Soviet prisoners were on Pakistani territory. Moscow and the resistance declared their readiness to discuss this issue directly. A resistance delegation met with Soviet officials in Islamabad to discuss this issue in November, after which an agreement to exchange prisoners was announced.

## Afghanistan in the Regional Context

### Pakistan

Pakistan remains the outside nation most affected by events in Afghanistan. As a result of the Soviet invasion and occupation, Pakistan eventually played host to some 3 million refugees and has faced terrorist campaigns and shellings and bombings of its territory. Pakistan also has hosted the leadership of the Afghan resistance and has advocated the *mujahidin* cause in the United Nations, the Nonaligned Movement (NAM), and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Pakistan played the key role in the long and tortuous negotiations leading to the Geneva accords.

At Geneva, despite considerable pressure from the U.S.S.R. and the Kabul regime, Pakistan did not relent on points of principle. Pakistani steadfastness was instrumental in getting the Moscow-Kabul side to make considerable concessions. The Soviets, for example, first insisted that 4 years would be required for a withdrawal. They eventually agreed to a 9-month timeframe. Pakistan consistently refused to recognize the PDPA regime and insisted on an indirect proximity talks formula throughout the long years of negotiations. As noted earlier, Islamabad pressed to include a provision in the accords for a neutral interim government to supersede the discredited PDPA regime and end the fighting.

While Pakistanis have expressed frustration at the seemingly endless conflict—the millions of refugees as well as the often bloody sabotage bombings, shellings, and aerial bombardments from across the border—they have been remarkably consistent in their support of their government's policy. At no time has it been suggested seriously that the country capitulate, expel the resistance and the refugees, and come to terms with Kabul. This steadfastness in the face of long years of hardship has impressed the international community.

The signing of the accords and the beginning of the Soviet withdrawal greatly buoyed spirits in Pakistan. A May poll showed that fully 68% of the respondents favored continued aid to the refugees, and 60% felt the *mujahidin* would win the war. The perception is increasing that the *mujahidin* are on the verge of victory.

The August 17 death of President Zia al-Haq in an airplane crash did not

## Afghanistan and the Region



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affect Pakistan's Afghan policy as his successor as head of state, Ghulam Is-haq Khan, steered Pakistani policy in the same direction. Following the November 16 elections, opposition leader Benazir Bhutto became the new Prime Minister and publicly indicated full support for Pakistan's Afghan policy.

### India

India was one of the few noncommunist states not to join the wave of international protest that followed the Soviet invasion. Although New Delhi did not protest the invasion, it did not support it and has expressed its desire on many occasions to see the Soviet troops depart.

India has maintained friendly relations with the Kabul regime. In 1987, India's Foreign Minister met senior Afghan officials in Kabul, sponsored a trade fair in Afghanistan, assisted Afghan officials seeking membership in the South Asian Association for Re-

gional Cooperation (SAARC), and supported Kabul in the United Nations and nonaligned forum.

On May 3-5, 1988, Najibullah made a state visit to New Delhi; India has been the only noncommunist country to accord full state honors to Kabul. Although Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi received Najibullah, no significant agreements emerged, and while India maintains economic and cultural links with Afghanistan, it has publicly stated its intention not to provide the regime with large-scale aid. Although India again sponsored Afghanistan's membership in SAARC in 1988, the group decided not to consider the application until a fully representative government was established in Kabul. In recent months India has not made further high-profile gestures in support of Najibullah and now appears to be waiting until the shape of a future government is determined. In late 1988, increasing numbers of regime figures arrived in India in search of asylum, including a KHAD general related to Najibullah.

### Iran

Although preoccupied with its own revolution and war with Iraq, Iran has been an outspoken supporter of the *mujahidin* and hosts more than 1 million refugees in camps primarily along its eastern border. Although it did not participate in the Geneva negotiations, Iran was kept informed of the proceedings by the United Nations.

Iran feels a special kinship with Afghanistan's Shia Muslims with whom it shares religious and cultural ties; and it is critical of the Sunni-dominated Resistance Alliance based in Peshawar for what it perceives as an anti-Shia bias. Although its abilities are limited, Iran mainly supports Shia groups, primarily from western and central Afghanistan, while repeatedly calling for the withdrawal of Soviet troops.

### The People's Republic of China

China, concerned about regional stability and Soviet expansionism, has made Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan a precondition to normalization of Sino-Soviet relations. China supports the Geneva accords and has criticized repeatedly Soviet "pretexts" for delaying withdrawal. It also depicts Soviet withdrawal and failure to agree on a coalition government as furnishing both positive and negative models for a Cambodian settlement.

China's ties to Pakistan are a crucial component of its Afghan policy. The P.R.C. fully supported the Pakistani positions on an interim government and symmetry during the Geneva negotiation process and has worked closely with Pakistan to provide assistance to Afghan refugees.

## Afghanistan in the International Arena

### Gaining Islamic and International Credibility

The single most important event in Afghanistan's foreign relations during the year was the April 14 signing of the Geneva accords. Najibullah clearly was a reluctant participant and Wakil, who actually signed for the regime at Geneva, even more so. Nevertheless, Najibullah has tried to make the best of it—portraying himself for both domestic and international audiences as the great peacemaker. The message, how-

ever, has not been convincing to most observers, who give the resistance *mujahidin* the credit for Moscow's decision. Conversely, Najibullah's political enemies have been all too eager to let him take the blame for what they see as a Soviet "sell-out."

Najibullah began the year on a high note, having just returned from a December 1987 trip to Asia, where he met with Indian Prime Minister Gandhi for the first time and also visited Vietnam and Cambodia. In May, Najibullah went again to India on a trip that was heralded by the Kabul media as an expression of confidence by the Indian Government. Najibullah continued his travels in early June with a trip to the United Nations, where he addressed the Special Session on Disarmament, and a visit to Cuba. However, plans to continue on to Czechoslovakia were canceled, presumably because of instability and coup rumors in Kabul. Since then, Najibullah has stayed close to home—except for some probable unpublicized visits to Moscow.

Despite these efforts, the regime never has gained international credibility. Few countries outside the communist bloc recognize it as legitimate. Efforts by the regime in 1988 to change its status as an international pariah were largely a failure. Throughout the year, Najibullah has tried assiduously to associate himself and the new government with Islamic tradition and has pushed for expanded international acceptance—particularly in the Islamic world.

In March, the PDPA Politburo established an "Islamic University" in Kabul; on various occasions Najibullah appeared before the "Islamic High Consultative Council" to report on government policies and plans. In late October, the regime sponsored an international Islamic conference in Kabul to commemorate the Prophet Mohammed's birthday. Najibullah once again appealed for a cease-fire and talks with the "opposition," this time suggesting Mecca as a venue.

### The Kabul Regime and the OIC

The Organization of the Islamic Conference declared the Afghan seat vacant at the time of the Soviet invasion. It since has been contested by the resistance and the Kabul regime. Following Gorbachev's February 8 withdrawal announcement, Kabul embarked on an ambitious plan to convince OIC mem-

bers that the imminent Soviet withdrawal signaled a basic change in conditions and that the OIC could award its Afghan seat to Kabul at its forthcoming ministerial meeting to be held in Amman from March 21 to 25. Foreign Minister Wakil was dispatched to foreign capitals as part of Kabul's lobbying campaign.

Saudi Arabia, location of the OIC's headquarters, was instrumental in rebuffing Kabul's effort. Saudi Arabia has been among the most vigorous of the Arab countries opposed to the Soviet occupation and has helped organize Arab and Muslim states against it. A resistance delegation attended the OIC meeting as observers and presented its case to the delegates. On March 21, in a tacit admission of the campaign's failure, the Afghan Foreign Ministry issued a statement condemning discussion of the Afghan issue in Amman as "unjustifiable and open interference in the internal affairs of an Islamic country."

On March 23, the OIC passed a strong resolution noting the worldwide condemnation of the Soviet occupation reflected in previous UN and OIC resolutions. It called on all OIC members to withhold recognition of the Kabul regime until all Soviet troops were withdrawn and to stop all forms of aid to Kabul. It also commended Pakistan for providing asylum to Afghan refugees, called for an immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops, and deplored Afghan air raids, bombings, and terrorism directed against Pakistan.

While praising the resistance for its struggle against Soviet occupation, the conference did not award the vacant Afghan seat to the *mujahidin*, stating that it would be filled when the fighting had ceased, an acceptable government had been established, and the refugees had returned. It did, however, recommend that conference members establish closer relations with the resistance.

### Afghanistan in the NAM

In 1988, the Nonaligned Movement held its ministerial from September 5 to 10 at Nicosia, Cyprus, and adopted a consensus resolution on a variety of international issues. The resolution expressed "deep satisfaction" at the conclusion of the Geneva accords and commended the United Nations for its efforts but urged that a "broad-based government" be established in Afghanistan. This echoed previous NAM declarations which refused to confer legitimacy on the Kabul regime.

### Expanding Bilateral Relationships

During the year, the regime established an embassy in Vienna and gained accreditation to Nicaragua, Cyprus, and Ghana respectively for its ambassadors in Cuba, Moscow, and Ethiopia.

### Afghanistan and the Media

The Kabul regime and the Soviet media have alleged that Western, Pakistani, and Arab military advisers were active in Afghanistan. In October, Kabul claimed that two Americans were killed in combat inside Afghanistan, while in November there were claims of up to 20 Americans at a time fighting in Afghanistan. No evidence has ever been produced, and the United States has termed Kabul's charges as spurious.

Kabul and the U.S.S.R. actively have attempted to prevent reporters from entering the country, except through Kabul's auspices. Seven journalists—one Norwegian, one Japanese, one Australian, one British, one Pakistani, and two Americans—have been killed covering the war, and three have been captured and imprisoned. The Kabul regime has offered sizable cash rewards for the capture or killing of foreign journalists traveling with the *mujahidin* in an attempt to dissuade other journalists from entering Afghanistan.

Two captured journalists were released in 1988. Alain Guillo, a French journalist, captured in October 1987, was tried and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment as a spy. He was released on May 29, 1988. Fausto Biloslavo, an Italian journalist, was captured in November 1987. He was tried in Kabul for "illegal entry and spying" and was sentenced to 7 years imprisonment. He was released on June 1, 1988.

In both cases the Kabul regime attempted to obtain legitimacy by manipulating the imprisoned reporters. Both Italy and France have restricted contacts with Kabul and were forced by the incarceration of their nationals to hold talks with Kabul. The journalists were not released until high-level government officials asked Najibullah to "pardon" them. These exchanges were given wide coverage in the Soviet and Kabul media.

Following the Geneva accords, the Soviets became more responsive to journalists and flew foreign reporters to Qandahar on Soviet planes, allowed them to accompany withdrawing Soviet



troops, and gave them free access to Soviet soldiers. This proved to be a unique opportunity for veteran journalists—who had long covered the war only from the resistance side or through tightly controlled visits to Kabul—to experience the war from the point of view of the average Soviet soldier.

The Soviets' own coverage also began to change. For the first time the Soviet people were exposed to realistic reports of combat inside Afghanistan and were allowed to learn of the grim and bloody nature of the conflict. Previous Soviet coverage had been spare and unenlightening, stressing the successes of the Red Army and its support from the Afghan people. For the first time Soviet commentators began to discuss the difficulties facing Soviet troops and Afghan resistance to sovietization. This change in coverage was meant to encourage public support for Gorbachev's withdrawal decision, shift the blame for the disaster onto the previous regime, and perhaps prepare the Soviet public for impending withdrawal from Afghanistan in the face of continued fighting there.

## Human Rights and Afghanistan

The most serious violations of human rights in Afghanistan have resulted from the disregard of the humanitarian rules of war by Soviet and Kabul regime forces. Soviet Kabul forces continue to kill and injure civilians in retaliation for *mujahidin* success as well as during attempts to create secure areas. Tactics used against the civilian population include high-altitude bombing raids, indiscriminate air and artillery attacks, timebombs set to detonate during peak travel hours along popular supply routes, and boobytraps cleverly designed to attract children. Resistance forces also have been responsible for violent acts which have brought death and injury to noncombatants.

Abuses by the Kabul regime and Soviet army remain widespread—despite some amelioration as part of the regime's national reconciliation campaign. Najibullah's government has engaged in political killing, abduction, forced conscription, torture, arbitrary arrest, and systematic denial of basic human rights. Thousands of Afghans



*Mujahidin* fighters with a Soviet antipersonnel mine (Camera Press)

have been arrested and imprisoned for years without trial and hundreds have been summarily executed or died from mistreatment. Kabul regime press gangs often forcibly snatch underage Afghan males from the streets. Parents are seldom notified, and the children simply disappear into the army.

Victims have described the systematic use of torture in regime prisons. Some have alleged the torture was directed or observed by Soviet personnel. Imprisoned foreign nationals from a number of countries are denied access to their embassies. The regime does not protect Afghan citizens from arbitrary arrest. Arrest warrants are not issued, and detainees have been kept imprisoned for years without access to legal assistance, family, or medical care. Najibullah's "revolutionary justice" system tries, sentences, and sometimes executes prisoners in secret. Food, water, and sanitary facilities are in short supply in Afghanistan's overcrowded prisons. Many prisoners are chronically ill.

Private homes in Afghanistan routinely are searched by government forces. Telephones are tapped and correspondence monitored. All media are controlled by the PDPA with no dissenting opinions allowed. Foreign radio broadcasts are often jammed. Any expression of dissent from PDPA views or criticism of the Soviet Union can result in imprisonment.

Amnesty International's May 1987 report on Afghanistan condemned the Kabul Soviet practice of detaining, executing, and attacking refugees fleeing to Pakistan. It contains eyewitness accounts of attacks on refugees by Soviet and regime troops. The report also attacks torture in regime prisons and noted that political prisoners are often forcibly conscripted upon their release from prison, a practice Amnesty International decries as nothing more than "continued political imprisonment." Throughout 1987 and into 1988, Amnesty International received no response to its numerous requests for information about prisoners.

Amnesty International noted that under Najibullah's national reconciliation program some 10,000 political prisoners may have been freed. However, regime attacks on civilians did not cease after the program was initiated, and the flow of refugees into Pakistan and Iran continued unabated. The United Nations noted some improvement in the movement of refugees into and out of neighboring countries.

In 1988, Felix Ermacora, the UN's special rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan, again visited both Afghanistan and Pakistan to gather facts and impressions and prepare a written report. Ermacora criticized Afghanistan's new constitution, which



he charged was not a "free act of self-determination," did not guarantee a multiparty system, and did not adequately safeguard human rights. He noted that human rights would not be assured until the "revolutionary tribunals," revolutionary prosecutor, and secret police (KHAD) were abolished. Ermacora described the large numbers of refugees as the principal human rights problem facing the country and noted that the presence of Soviet troops was the principal hindrance to their return.

For the past several years, the United Nations, despite Soviet efforts to quash debate, has passed annual resolutions on the "Question of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in Afghanistan." These resolutions have been critical of the human rights situation in Afghanistan.

The most recent resolution, passed by consensus in December 1988, recognized "some improvements in some aspects of the human rights situation in Afghanistan" but expressed deep concern about continuing allegations of torture and ill-treatment of prisoners, continuing disappearances, and the incarceration of political prisoners. It noted that human rights violations "persist with the same frequency as in the past" and that civilians are most affected.

## The Afghan Economy

### Agriculture and Food Supply

Abundant snow and rainfall over the winter months ensured a good spring wheat harvest, helping keep prices of staples down in the first half of 1988. Meat prices registered the largest increases, a reflection of continuing herd attrition from the fighting. The regime for the first time began importing meat from India to feed troops. Some of this meat reached the market, moderating price increases somewhat. Meat prices in Kabul essentially increased by an estimated 73% over 1987 prices, and what little meat was available was of very poor quality.

### Inflation

Inflation continued to increase steadily in 1988 despite a highly publicized government campaign to keep prices down. Food shortages and price increases were more pronounced toward the end of 1988, when fighting closed roads leading to Kabul and Qandahar. Annual

inflation reached an estimated 40% (up from an estimated 30%-35% inflation rate in 1987).

The extensive destruction and depopulation of previously productive agricultural areas near Kabul during 1987 forced merchants to seek fruits and vegetables from farther distances. Potato prices increased sharply because of difficulty in transporting them from the main growing area in central Afghanistan. Prices for firewood also began climbing in the fall as fighting reduced access to forested areas; demand was abnormally high because of a scarcity of kerosene. The regime blamed the kerosene shortage on transportation problems.

### Continued Depreciation of the Afghani

A 25% depreciation of the Afghani during 1988 increased the scarcity of foreign exchange, making commercial imports more expensive. The currency depreciation, and regime efforts to force merchants wishing to trade with private Western firms to first sign barter contracts with the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) organizations, spurred reliance on barter trade with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

The sharp depreciation of the Afghani against the U.S. dollar and other Western currencies was fueled, in part, by large hard currency purchases by the regime. Earlier in the year the Afghani rose and fell with reports of progress in the Geneva talks, with merchants buying Afghani in anticipation of an early refugee return. The decline in the value of the Afghani resumed in earnest after the terms of the Soviet withdrawal were set.

### General Economic Performance

Agricultural production declined in 1987 according to regime reports and probably fell again in 1988 because of further damage to fields and irrigation systems. Natural gas exports also dropped due to *mujahidin* activity in gas-producing areas and around the export pipeline to the Soviet Union.

In a March 14 speech to provincial governors and members of the Afghan Council of Ministers, Prime Minister Keshitmand blamed lagging economic activity and exports on a shortage of raw materials and mismanagement by government enterprises. He attributed a sharp decline in hard currency earnings to an absolute decline in Afghan exports and to an increasing reliance on barter trade with CMEA countries.

### Soviet Aid in 1988

The Soviet Union began instituting aid agreements between individual Soviet republics and Afghan provinces in 1987 to better control aid disbursements and bind the Afghan economy closely to its own. Many of these agreements involve aid to the agricultural sector, particularly flood control and irrigation projects, but they also are used as a conduit for commodity imports, particularly foodstuffs. The number of these aid agreements grew rapidly in 1988, and a significant proportion of Soviet aid is now funneled through them. For example, Laghman Province received shoes, mattresses, soap, salt, wheat, and radios under its aid agreement with Belorussian S.S.R.

Expansion of the Kabul Airport was completed in May with Soviet assistance. As part of an ongoing 10-year, \$150-million Soviet aid program to augment Afghan electricity supplies, Kabul was linked to the Soviet power grid in late 1988.

## UN Humanitarian Effort

The Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan have inflicted immense suffering on the Afghan people and left the country with enormous physical destruction. Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed or maimed, and about 3.2 million people have fled to Pakistan and another 2 million to Iran rather than submit to the Soviets and the illegitimate Kabul regime. Another 1-2 million people have been internally displaced.

Besides the millions of refugees, there has been extensive physical destruction of homes, mosques, roads and bridges, orchards, and irrigation systems. Health and educational systems have been disrupted severely. Mines have been sown indiscriminately over much of the country, rendering many agricultural fields useless in a country where agriculture forms the "backbone" of its economy.

The size of the problem is such that no single country can provide the resources required to help the Afghan people meet the challenge before them. The demand for expertise and financial aid compel an international response to which the United Nations and its technical and development agencies must provide leadership.

The United Nations is responding to this need. In May, the Secretary

General appointed a Special Coordinator for Afghan Humanitarian Affairs, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan. UN agencies have begun drawing up plans and stockpiling food, medicine, and other necessities in anticipation of the return of the refugees. Plans are also being made for the eventual reconstruction of the country.

### Refugee Repatriation

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) will have chief responsibility for the return of several million Afghans, a repatriation effort that is unprecedented in modern history. The successful repatriation of the refugees will depend on the return of peace and stability. This in turn depends on the timetable of Soviet withdrawal and prospects for political and military stability at both national and provincial levels. Another factor which will influence the refugee return is the speed with which the mines are destroyed or neutralized. Economic opportunities in Pakistan and Iran in comparison with expected opportunities in Afghanistan also will play a role. Finally, the rate of return will be heavily dependent upon the restoration of agricultural productivity, prior to which supply of food from the outside will be essential.

Over half of the several million refugees expected to return to Afghanistan following the Soviet withdrawal will be children and young adults. In some border provinces, where the war has greatly disrupted village life, returning refugees and displaced persons will outnumber residents. The heaviest concentration of returning refugees will be in the war-ravaged eastern and southern regions, followed by Herat Province in the west.

### Refugees in Pakistan

The ethnic Pushtuns, who have maintained strong tribal ties despite severe disruption of their lifestyles, include about 80% of the Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Most Pushtuns moved into refugee camps in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan from villages within 100 miles of the border. Some refugees have moved back and forth across the border to join the *mujahidin* and to trade or temporarily return to their farms. Pushtuns should be the first wave of returning refugees because of their fierce independence and close proximity to home. Other



Afghan father and son waiting to return home. (C. Larson)

ethnic groups who fled from farther away, such as the Hazaras, Tajiks, and Uzbeks, probably will be more cautious in returning.

Since the Soviet invasion, the Government of Pakistan has provided generous assistance to the Afghan refugees despite domestic economic strains and international pressures. Most refugees live in camp clusters of mud and straw houses as they would in their home villages. The refugees in Pakistan are allowed to travel outside the camps and to take remunerative jobs. Many of the more than 300 camps scattered along the border region have well-developed

and specialized markets that interact with each other as well as with local Pakistani markets. Refugees, where possible, work as traders, laborers, and truck drivers. Their economic stability and access to better medical care than was available in their home villages have resulted in very high fertility rates and relatively low infant mortality rates. Thus more Afghans may return than initially fled.

By fall 1988, no significant repatriation had occurred; indeed, refugees are still fleeing areas of heavy fighting. Most Afghans in Pakistan

probably will wait until late spring or early summer 1989 to return home because of continued instability in the eastern and southern regions. The border area still offers a less-than-hospitable homecoming, despite a reduced Soviet presence, because of widespread distribution of landmines and fierce fighting between the *mujahidin* and Kabul regime forces in and around towns and cities. As the border areas become more secure, refugees will begin returning to their villages to repair homes and irrigation ditches and prepare abandoned farmland for the first planting next spring.

### Refugees in Iran

The return of Afghan refugees from Iran is much harder to predict than that from Pakistan. They are more spatially diffused and have become more integrated into the host country economy than their fellow refugees in Pakistan. Although Iran may have as many as 2 million Afghans, about half are Persian-speaking economic migrants who may not return in the next couple of years unless Iran's economy continues to nose dive. Most of the estimated 1 million Afghan refugees in Iran are expected to return to the western provinces of Herat and Farah.

### Rural Stability and Urbanization

Afghanistan's rural population has fallen sharply since the Soviet occupation. Those villagers who did not flee the country often migrated to cities such as Kabul, Qandahar, and Herat. All of the towns and cities in the southern and eastern provinces have been damaged by the war and a few have been completely deserted. Some Afghans, rather than become refugees, migrated to Kabul which, as a result, has more than quadrupled its population (to about 2 million).

Internally displaced Afghans have proven to be a serious problem. While refugees receive considerable attention from relief agencies, displaced persons often are overlooked. Having migrated to cities, many are housed in urban slums in substandard conditions and are suffering from unemployment and malnutrition. There are some indications that they are in worse condition

than the refugees. This group will require considerable attention as the country reconstructs.

Resettling displaced persons and refugees in their former villages, replanting crops, restoring irrigation canals, and reorganizing marketing systems will be major obstacles to rural stability and will require substantial foreign assistance. Peaceful resettlement also may be hindered by conflicts over land tenure between those who stayed and those returning. Finally, the threat of food shortages or the reality of entrenched rural poverty, coming after 8 years of relief assistance, may push some refugees and displaced persons to cities that will be hard pressed to accommodate them.

### Infrastructure and Agriculture

Although much infrastructural damage can be repaired with local material and labor, major reconstruction projects, such as rebuilding bridges and main highways, will require international assistance and may take several years. Along with infrastructural damage and labor shortages, land abandonment has been blamed for much of the decline in agricultural productivity within Afghanistan. If traditional staples, particularly wheat and rice, once again are to support the local population, attention must be paid not only to the provision of good seed, fertilizer, and livestock but also to marketing systems that hold the key to regional development. If this effort fails, farmers returning to the eastern and southern provinces may resort to opium cultivation to provide them with much-needed income during the first few years.

### The International Relief Effort

An extensive rural development program—focusing on basic needs, agricultural production, and marketing systems—will be required over the next few years to avert famine and uncontrolled migrations to cities. But before that long-term development effort can take place, the UNHCR and several governmental and voluntary agencies face the challenge of assisting several million poor, but proud, Afghans in returning home. Although the United Nations has contingency plans for repatriation, including monitoring stations and food rations through the first harvest, it will be unable to control when and where the refugees go or to

provide the major infrastructural assistance that will be needed.

Over the next year repatriation and relief efforts probably will be directed at the southern and eastern provinces. These provinces will face a difficult task absorbing the upcoming influx, but their relatively close proximity to refugee camps and tribal and economic links among Pushtuns on both sides of the border should ease the transition period.

## U.S. Policy

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### Geneva Accords

Since Soviet forces invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, their prompt and complete withdrawal has been viewed by the United States as the single most important factor in solving the Afghanistan crisis. The Geneva accords, signed on April 14, 1988, provided a timetable for that goal. Their centerpiece is the stipulation that all Soviet troops must be removed from Afghanistan no later than February 15, 1989. The accords constitute a first step toward resolving the Afghan conflict. In this regard, the withdrawal of Soviet troops will set the stage for the return of the refugees to a free, sovereign, and nonaligned Afghanistan, where they may decide their own future free from outside interference.

On August 15, 1988, the Soviet Union met the first benchmark stipulated in the agreements by essentially completing the withdrawal of 50% of its forces from Afghanistan. The United States fully expects the Soviet Union to adhere to its commitment at Geneva by withdrawing its forces completely from Afghanistan no later than the February 15, 1989, deadline given in the accords.

When the United States agreed along with the Soviet Union to become a co-guarantor of the agreements, it insisted that the obligations of the guarantors must be balanced and symmetrical. The United States was prepared to accept a joint U.S.-Soviet moratorium on further military supplies to parties in Afghanistan for a limited period of time. The Soviets, however, refused to accept such an arrangement, claiming a right to continue furnishing

military hardware to their clients in Kabul. Consequently, the United States insisted that it would retain and exercise the right, consistent with its own obligations as a guarantor, to provide military assistance to parties in Afghanistan. The United States added that it was prepared to exercise restraint in providing military assistance should the Soviet Union do so as well.

Unfortunately, the Soviet Union since has chosen not only to continue supplying the Kabul regime with military goods but also to increase the scale and breadth of its assistance, providing the PDPA regime with weaponry and technology heretofore unavailable to it.

The United States regards direct Soviet-resistance talks as a positive development and supports a peaceful settlement of the Afghan conflict involving genuine Afghan self-determination. The form of a future government, and the modalities for choosing it, are for the Afghans themselves to decide. The United States backs no parties or individuals in this process.

### **Humanitarian Assistance**

The United States supports the United Nations as it prepares for the task of resettlement of millions of Afghan refugees. Moreover, it will cooperate fully with the resettlement and reconstruction effort under the direction of

Sadrudin Aga Khan, the UN Coordinator for Afghan relief.

From 1980 to 1988, the U.S. Government has provided approximately \$750 million in humanitarian aid for the Afghans through multilateral and bilateral channels. These funds helped provide food and health care, housing, education, and vocational training. In fiscal year (FY) 1989, the United States will provide an additional \$150 million in aid.

Beginning in 1985, the U.S. Government, through the Agency for International Development (AID), has administered a cross-border humanitarian assistance program to assist the Afghan people in countering the systematic destruction of their crops, livestock, and property inflicted by the Soviet army. This program also provides Afghans with the means to survive in their country and helps them resist the pressures that have forced millions of their compatriots to become refugees in Pakistan.

U.S. support is channeled through the various technical committees of the Afghan Resistance Alliance to support their efforts to provide education, health, and agricultural services inside Afghanistan. The U.S. Government also channels support through American and European private voluntary agencies. The alliance technical committees and the private voluntary agencies make it possible to deliver foodstuffs, textbooks, medicines, agricultural

equipment, and livestock to war-affected people still inside Afghanistan who need them most. For FY 1989, cross-border humanitarian assistance is valued at \$71.74 million plus an additional \$23 million in emergency refugee and migration assistance funds designated by the Congress to be administered under the cross-border program.

In addition, AID and the Department of Defense provide excess humanitarian goods as well as help transport food, medicines, and clothing donated to the alliance by private groups in the United States. As part of the same program, Afghans wounded in the war are transported to the United States, Europe, and the Middle East for free medical treatment. As of July 31, 1988, more than 600 patients had been placed worldwide. ■

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